

OZRO RPG



A fantasy role-playing game

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Playtesters

FIXME Do they want to be included?

PREFACE

This book contains a system of rules for a role-playing game.

The rules are designed to evoke a certain flavour of a game, and allow the GM, the Game Master, to create a specific atmosphere at the table. They are fair but harsh—one might say, *dura lex, sed lex*—and a great deal of care went into ensuring balance between their various elements; they are not designed to ensure smooth sailing for player characters under all circumstances.

The intention is that the rules should make the game world feel gritty, dangerous, and out to get the player characters; that the player characters should never feel completely at ease, safe and secure, and that they should always have one eye open or a sentry posted at the entrance to their camp or hideout.

Player characters, in turn, are given the tools to fight back.

TRAIN TO EXCEL

The core of the rules is the success-counting dice pool-based skill system. It is designed to allow unlimited progression without artificial limits, but also without runaway power growth. If a player decides they want their character to become a true master in a skill it is possible, but will require dedication, time, and plenty of experience.

Progression yields diminishing returns, but having a bigger dice pool is *always* advantageous. It gives the players a tactile reward—they can see their dice pools, representing the power of their character, grow in front of their eyes—and can lead to spectacular results, or be the difference between the life and death of a character.

Sometimes that one die, that one success, is what tips the scales.

The characters will not be overpowered, but will be dangerous enough be worthy adversaries to the game world and make their mark upon it.

FIGHT TO WIN, AND FIGHT DIRTY

Combat is deadly, and relies more on skills and planning than equipment; it requires tactical thinking, seizing opportunities, and being prepared. There are mechanics in place to let the players exploit an occasional wide difference in the success counts of the opposing sides, inherent to dice pool systems; one-strike kill damage spikes, crippling status effects, equipment damage, etc.

Equipment is meant to *used up*, not just used; blades get blunt, armour gets dented, resources dwindle. All of these, however, are costs for which the players can get something back, not just penalties. Military weapons and armour are meant to be expensive and, at times, illegal. Money is meant to be scarce.

WHAT IS THE GAME ABOUT?

The rules are designed for a game about adventures of a squad of mercenaries; a group of grave robbers and dungeon raiders; a band of brigands on the outskirts of the law; a pack of underdogs who had had enough, and decided to fight back against the system.

Ultimately, this is the deal: the game world created by the rules is harsh and unforgiving, but those same rules give players the opportunity to build characters resilient enough to survive... and maybe, if they are smart about it and luck shines on them that day, even come out on top.

You have been given all the information about the intended *mood* of the game, about how the game is meant to be played. You can probably guess what type of stories the system is geared towards. Now you have to make your choice.

If you decided to stay—welcome, and have fun.

I. INTRODUCTION

This part presents, in broad strokes, and defines the terms and symbols used in the rest of the book. Reading it whole is beneficial for people new to the hobby; and even if you are an experienced player, it is recommended that you read chapter 1, What is a role-playing game?, to get a better grasp of what kind of game Ozro is.

1 WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

It is a game about making choices.

The catch is, you are supposed to make the choices *your character* would make; not the ones *you* yourself would. The distinction between *you*, a real person, and *your character*, a person only existing within the game world, is crucial. For example, *you* may be an accountant and *your character* may be a barbarian; in this situation, within the game world you should be making choices you think a barbarian would make.

ROLE-PLAYING

This is the **role-playing** part. For the duration of a game session, you are supposed to *play the role* of your character, and act as they would.

The word “act” may be misleading. In the context of Ozro, “to act” means “to take action”. An RPG is not improvised theatre, and it is absolutely unnecessary to engage in theatrics to play the role of your character. For example, playing the role of a barbarian means taking actions a barbarian would take in a given situation.

Of course, *you* are the one interpreting any situation that may present itself during a game, but you should look at it through the eyes of *your character*.

GAME

The **game** part means that there are *rules* dictating what your character can and cannot do, how good are they at doing a particular thing, or what happens as the consequence of a choice you made.

In Ozro, the core mechanic is a skill test performed by rolling a *dice pool* and *counting successes* (it is described in detail in chapter Rules on page 26).

DICE POOLS

A *dice pool* is a set of dice rolled together. The dice in a pool are usually all of the same category eg, six-sided. A short-hand notation is used to describe dice pools eg, 3D6 means a pool of three six-sided dice, and 8D10 means a pool of eight ten-sided dice.

Sometimes you may need to only keep a certain number of highest or lowest rolls; in such cases the pool description will include a KH or KL marker telling you exactly how many eg, 6D8KH4 means a pool of six eight-sided dice of which only four highest are kept after a roll.

SUCCESS COUNTING

A *success* is either a 1 or a 2 rolled on a die. Whenever the rules call for a number of successes, they ask you to roll a dice pool and count the 1s and 2s you got. The more successes you have on a roll the better your character did.

2 WHAT IS A PLAYER CHARACTER?

A player character is two things: a set of values on a *character sheet*, and your avatar in the game world. A character sheet is a sheet of paper, or a note on your computer or phone, with your player character’s description.

You may come to associate the character with stories they were part of, or memories you made with your friends; but for the purposes of the game mechanics a character is a set of numbers describing the character’s *attributes*, *skills*, and *equipment*.

These numbers tell *you* what *your character* is good, or bad, at. You should keep them in mind when *playing the role* of your character. Ozro is designed in such a way that the numbers influence everything, and matter for both physical and social conflict; the game rewards playing to your character’s advantage

whenever possible. If every character in a group (the game is designed to be played by a group of two to four characters) does this, the group as a whole can become quite a formidable force in the struggle against the game world.

Player characters are described in detail in the Player Characters chapter on page 10.

II. PLAYER CHARACTERS

A player character is a fictional person in the game world.

3 CREATING A PLAYER CHARACTER

This part of the book describes what is necessary to *create* a character, but detailed rules for actually *playing* it are presented in subsequent chapters. For example, character archetypes are described in the Archetypes chapter on page 24, skill use in Rules on page 26, fight scenes in Combat on page 29, and spellcasting in Magic on page 31.



To create a character you need two sheets of paper (one for notes and intermediate values, and one for the final character sheet), a pen or a pencil, and some D6, D8, D10, and D12 dice.

Of course, apart from the aforementioned utensils, you should also have a rough idea of who you want your player character to be.

THE SOFT CHOICE

The first choice can be soft and vague, and answers the question of who the character is in the game world and the story.

This has less to do with rules than with what kind of *adventurer* you want the character to be, what *type of adventures* would you like them to have. A thieving rogue, sneaking around and conning people? A power-hungry sorcerer, always seeking more power and control? A ruthless warrior, selling their sword to the highest bidder? A fanatical cultist, looking to channel their lord's power into the earthly realm?

The answer to this question will be the Archetype of the character (see page 10).

THE HARD CHOICE

The second choice must be hard and precise, and answer the question of what do you want the character to *do* in the game.

This has all to do with the rules, so think mechanically. Do you want to focus on combat? On social, crafting, or other non-combat skills? If you want to use magic, your hand is forced in some ways, but there are still decisions awaiting.

This is covered by Skills (see page 11).

4 ARCHETYPE

Archetype is the source of rule-bending abilities of a player character, and is what defines the *role* of the character the most.

The main mechanic of the game is the same for everyone, but each archetype—**Warrior**, **Rogue**, **Sorcerer**, and **Cultist**—has its own way of bending the rules, making it particularly suited to certain tasks.

WARRIOR

The Warrior is the archetype focused on combat. A **warrior's schtick** is building up momentum in combat. See more on page 24.

Warriors can keep extra successes they score on a combat skill and use them in a variety of ways instead of just immediately inflicting more damage, as all other characters are forced to do. This lets a warrior attack multiple enemies at once, execute more attacks than would normally be possible, or build up momentum on lesser foes to unleash it on the main boss.

ROGUE

The Rogue is the archetype focused on non-combat skills. A **rogue's schtick** is bending and stretching the rules, in general, to their advantage. See more on page 24.

Rogues can keep extra successes they score on non-combat skills, and spend them on unrelated rolls. This lets a rogue be an incredibly effective operator in a wide array of situations. Before a bank heist, the rogue can study the designs of the locksmith who built the vault where the money is held; or read about survival in a jungle environment before embarking on a tropical adventure.

SORCERER

The Sorcerer is the archetype focused on control of magic. A **sorcerer's schtick** is being able to precisely control their magical power output. See more on page 24.

Sorcerers have a pool of magical energy they can use to cast spells, and they are able to decide exactly how many dice to take from the pool each time. This lets them be as subtle, or as destructive, as they wish, and control how quickly the pool gets depleted.

Sorcerer's spells tend to be fire-and-forgets: a fireball, a lightning bolt, a wound-binding spell. The power the sorcerer controls is raw magical energy that can be shaped, but cannot be reasoned with or given instructions. It is a sharp tool in the hands of a skilled artisan.

CULTIST

The Cultist is the archetype focused on channelling their master's power. A **cultist's schtick** is being able to draw from a pool of power that *never* runs out. See more on page 24.

Cultists do not own their power, they are just vessels for the power of their master—or masters, since nothing prevents a cultist from serving several ones. For example, a witch doctor can serve the ghosts of dead elders of the tribe, and the weather god. Each master's power is channeled through a totem, relic, fetish, etc; with the cultist being able to pull power through every totem separately.

Cultist's spells tend to be longer-lasting, and can affect the souls and minds of creatures (due to the influence of gods and demons), not just create simple effects.



Write down your chosen archetype on your scratch sheet. At this point, its name is the only relevant thing.

5 SKILLS

Skills are a player character's way of affecting the world. What this means is that as soon as you want to do something that will have consequences, you have to roll a skill.

You can talk in-character as much as you want, but as soon as you want to actually *convince* a non-player character of something, *haggle* to get a merchant to lower his prices, or *intimidate* a guard to let you in, you have to roll. You can describe your attack with all the flourish you want, but as soon as you want to actually do some damage you have to roll.

There is a finite list of skills to choose from. Make yourself familiar with the list before making your choice, and try to coordinate with other players—the broader the range of skills covered by different characters the more resilient the crew is.

COMBAT SKILLS

There are only a few combat skills available. The detailed rules, which you will need later, can be found in chapter Combat on page 29.

Unless your character's archetype is the Warrior, you should choose one offensive and one defensive skill, to give your character the best chance to survive combat. Warriors have more flexibility when it comes to choosing combat skills.

OFFENSIVE

Melee determines how good your character is in close-quarters combat, and **Ranged** determines how good are they in ranged combat. Each of these skills is qualified with the *weapon category* it applies to eg, Melee (Axe) or Ranged (Bow). Available weapon categories are:

- Melee (**axe**)
- Melee (**hammer**)
- Melee (**knife**): includes daggers and throwing knives
- Melee (**polearm**): pitchforks, halberds, spears, javelins (which can be thrown), etc
- Melee (**sword**)
- Melee (**unarmed**): boxing, brawling, wrestling, etc
- Ranged (**bow**)

- Ranged (**crossbow**)
- Ranged (**gun**)

See chapter Weapons on page 32 for the full discussion of weapons.

DEFENSIVE

Shields determines your character's proficiency with a shield, and **Dodge** says how well the character can get out of harm's way.

The third defensive skill is **Armour handling**. This one determines how much your player character gets out of the armour they wear, if any. What this means is that if your character is not skilled enough to use it, a full set of plate armour is just a fashion statement, with negligible effect on your character's safety.

Note that while shields provide additional benefits over just protection, they prevent a character from using two-handed weapons.

COMMON SKILLS

Common skills are numerous, and provide a wide array of actions to a player character. The main groups are: craft, social, and utility skills.

CRAFT

These skills are used to create or repair equipment, or provide materials for doing so. They are a good choice for any character.

1. **Alchemy**: create medicines, potions, salves, and stimulants of all kinds
2. **Blacksmithing**: create and repair weapons, armour, and tools
3. **Cartography**: draw maps and plans
4. **Cooking**: prepare food
5. **Drive**: drive carriages, wagons, etc
6. **First Aid**: quickly help wounded creatures
7. **Medicine**: nurse sick or wounded creature to health
8. **Navigation**: avoid getting lost
9. **Sail**: travel on naval vessels

The skills with most immediate usefulness are **Blacksmithing** and **Cooking**; the former helps with repairing equipment, the latter with repairing characters.

SOCIAL

Social interaction in Ozro is governed by rules, therefore the game needs social skills. They all have mechanics attached, and are worthy of consideration.

Most of the social skills are suited best towards Rogues, Sorcerers, and Cultists, but there are a few that can be effectively used by Warriors too.

1. **Foreign Language**: speak a foreign language
2. **Grace**: be polite, know proper etiquette, manners, way of speaking, etc
3. **Guile**: be clever, know how to lie, deceive, cheat, etc
4. **Haggle**: know how to get better prices
5. **Literacy**: know how to read and write
6. **Rhetoric**: convince people using reasonable (or unreasonable) arguments
7. **Intimidate**: scare someone into backing down, doing something, etc

Importance of the **Foreign Language** skill cannot be overstated. This skill is qualified with a particular language (similar to how Melee skill is qualified with a weapon category) and represents fluency in that language. Being able to speak a language is a *hard requirement* to be able to use most other social skills in that language.

In a similar vein, the **Literacy** skill is important and not everyone has it. There are illiterate people in the game world, and player characters can be illiterate too.

UTILITY

The biggest group of skills, with various applications. Every archetype can find something for themselves here.

1. **Animal Care**: know how to properly feed, heal, and prepare animals for work
2. **Animal Control**: know how to train and control animals
3. **Appraise**: determine value of items
4. **Climb**: scale walls, cliffs, and ladders
5. **Focus**: avoid getting distracted, resist others' influence
6. **Hide**: prevent objects, creatures, and yourself from being found or seen
7. **Lockpicking**: pick locks
8. **Ride**: ride horses and other mounts
9. **Search**: methodically search through an area, document, room, etc
10. **Sneak**: move undetected
11. **Survey**: quickly spot interesting features, get lay of the land, etc
12. **Survival**: know how to survive in the wilderness, and track creatures
13. **Swim**: self-explanatory
14. **Traps**: lay or disable traps

Table 1: Starting proficiencies and skill levels

sources of proficiency	skill level	success rate for a typical task			
		perfect (d6) attribute	good (d8) attribute	mediocre (d10) attribute	bad (d12) attribute
0	1	33.33%	25.00%	20.00%	16.67%
1	3	70.36%	57.81%	48.80%	42.12%
2	5	86.83%	76.27%	67.23%	59.82%
3	6	91.23%	82.20%	73.79%	66.50%
4	7	94.15%	86.66%	79.04%	72.08%
5	8	96.10%	90.32%	83.22%	76.74%

15. **Use rope:** tie and untie knots, bind captured creatures, etc

PROFICIENCIES

During character creation you gather **skill proficiencies** from your character's archetype, profession, and race. All three sources limit *how many* skill proficiencies you may take, and whether they can be combat or common skills.

At the end of the process the number of proficiency sources assigned to a skill will determine the **skill level** your character will start with in that skill, but what you need to know right now is that *the more proficiency sources* you can get *the better* your character will be at a skill (see table Starting proficiencies and skill levels on page 13).

ARCHETYPE

The archetype lets you take twelve proficiencies, but to what skills they may go varies:

Table 2: Archetype skill proficiencies

archetype	proficiencies	
	common	combat
Warrior	4	8
Rogue	9	3
Sorcerer	10	2
Cultist	10	2

Warrior and Rogue

A Warrior may select a combat skill twice and count it as two sources of proficiency; a Rogue may do the same with common skills. This lets them have four sources of proficiency in a few skills, instead of only three that would be possible under regular rules.

The Warrior's fundamental skill is one of the combat skills, and if you are playing a warrior you can choose

to spend one additional combat skill proficiency on the skill you have selected as the fundamental one eg, Melee (Sword). This is *on top of* being able to select any combat skill twice, so you can get *three* sources of proficiency in a combat skill from the Warrior archetype.

It is a good idea to choose one of the weapon skills thrice (or a defensive skill, if you want to play the role of a protector or guard, but this is a more tricky play style) and focus on this skill when gathering further proficiencies, as this can give your character a total of five sources of proficiency.

If your chosen archetype is the Rogue, you can choose any common skill as your fundamental one, and spend one additional common skill proficiency on it. This is *on top of* being able to select any common skill twice, so you can get *three* sources of proficiency in a common skill from the Rogue archetype.

It is advisable to choose one of the social or utility skills, depending on whether you want to be the "face" of the crew or play a more supportive role. You may want to take a look at full skill descriptions in chapter Common skills on page 26.

Sorcerer and Cultist

Sorcerers and Cultists have to spend some of their common skill proficiencies on spells if they want to get more spells than the three initial ones they get as a matter of course, and they are allowed to select a spell twice and count it as two sources of proficiency. See chapter Magic on page 31 for a list of spells.

The Sorcerer's fundamental skill is **Sorcery** (see page 24). It allows the sorcerer to control and shape magical power into spells, by spending mana points.

The Cultists' fundamental skill is **Commune** (see page 24). It allows the cultist to commune with their masters through totems.

Both the Sorcerer and the Cultist receive their respective fundamental skill automatically, and this counts as one source of proficiency. You may decide to spend at most *one* additional common skill proficiency on the fundamental skill.



Choose your character's skills and write them down on the scratch sheet, marking the number of sources of proficiency in each skill the character has.

For example, if you were creating a Sorcerer character, the skill list could look like this:

Melee (Knife)	I
Armour Handling	I
Sorcery	II
Rot	I (the initial <i>miracle</i>)
Fire	II (the initial <i>common spell</i>)
Plague	II (the initial <i>archetype spell</i>)
Heal	II (extra <i>spell</i>)
Literacy	I
Foreign Language	I
Focus	I
Guile	I
Search	I

Note that some spells are selected *twice*, giving two sources of proficiency; and that there are three *initial* spells, and an *extra* one bought by spending a proficiency.

And if you were creating a Warrior, the list could be:

Melee (Sword)	III
Melee (Polearm)	I
Melee (Hammer)	I
Armour Handling	II
Shield	I
First Aid	I
Intimidate	I
Survival	I
Cooking	I

Again, note that some skills—combat ones—are selected twice, giving two sources of proficiency; and the Melee (Sword) skill was selected as the fundamental one, permitting three sources of proficiency.

PROFESSION

Every profession lists eight skills, of which you can choose four. Profession descriptions begin on page 23.

You can decide to select a profession which will let you stack sources of proficiency, or to increase your character's versatility and choose a profession that will allow you to get new skills.

Write down the profession on your scratch sheet, and mark the skills you chose for your character.

Continuing the Warrior example, if you chose the Sellsword profession, the list of skills could look like this:

Melee (Sword)	III (+1)
Melee (Polearm)	I
Melee (Hammer)	I
Armour Handling	III (+1)
Shield	I
First Aid	I
Intimidate	II (+1)
Survival	I
Cooking	I
Survey	I (new skill)

RACE

Every race lists eight common skills, of which you can choose four; and four weapon skills, of which you can choose two. Race descriptions begin on page 20.

Continuing the Warrior Sellsword example, if you chose the Human race, the list of skills could look like this:

Melee (Sword)	III (+1)
Melee (Polearm)	I
Melee (Hammer)	I
Armour Handling	III
Shield	II (+1)
First Aid	II (+1)
Intimidate	II
Survival	II (+1)
Cooking	I
Survey	I
Literacy	I (new skill)
Focus	I (new skill)

6 ATTRIBUTES

Attributes describe a player character's natural aptitudes. Combined with skills, attributes form the fundament upon which the whole rule system of Ozro is built.

BASE VALUES

Base values of a character's primary attributes are constant—they do not change after a character's creation.

While this may sound too strict, remember that *skills* can be trained and improved. This supports the game's fiction, part of which is the possibility of overcoming the limitations a character has been "born with". As showed by Table 1 on page 13, it is possible to train your way to mastery even with a bad attribute.

STRENGTH

Strength represents a character's might, and how much force they can exert on the world. In combat, it affects melee weapon attacks.

ENDURANCE

Endurance is a measure of bodily health and natural resistance to physical damage, disease, exhaustion, and general hardship. In combat, good endurance allows wearing heavier armour.

DEXTERITY

Dexterity tells how good a character is at tasks that require precision. Picking locks or disarming traps are examples of things affected by dexterity.

COORDINATION

Coordination represents a character's ability to control their body. In combat, it affects ranged weapon attacks and the ability to dodge.

WILL

Will power determines a character's resolve, force of personality, and strength of character. In combat, it helps one to keep a calm mind and avoid panic.

AWARENESS

Awareness shows how sharp a character's senses are, and how quick the character's reactions are. In combat, it allows spotting opponent's weaknesses.

CUNNING

Cunning represents wits, guile, and reasoning. In combat, it lets one distract an enemy, making them an easier target.



There are seven primary attributes, and the value of each is determined semi-randomly.

Roll 6D8KH4 ie, roll six eight-sides dice and keep the highest four, seven times (once for each attribute). Do not assign the values to attributes just yet.

In the following steps you will get modifiers to certain attributes depending on your character's archetype and race. Only then you will be able to make an informed choice about how to distribute the values you got. For now, just keep in mind that **bigger numbers are better numbers**.

Your goal is to get the biggest number in the attribute most important to your character, second biggest in the second most important attribute, and so on. Even if you do not care about creating a fully optimised munchkin, assigning the biggest numbers to the most important attributes is a good idea.

How to decide which attributes are the most important? Just look at which skills have the most tally marks (or the equivalent, if you were tracking collected proficiencies in a different way) on your scratch sheet, and check which attribute governs them. See the chapters about combat (on page 26) and common (on page 26) skills to learn which attributes are the most relevant to your character.

Counting the tally marks from skills presented in the warrior example from the earlier chapters would give the following result:

Strength	
Endurance	
Awareness	
Cunning	
Will	

Clearly, Strength is the most important attribute, followed by Awareness, with Endurance and Cunning ex-aequo in the third place, and Will just past the podium. Dexterity and Coordination would not be important to this character.

RATINGS

Getting the base values is an automatic process that does not require any choices. However, before taking the next step and deciding which modifiers to choose, it is important to know what numbers you are aiming for.

As stated before, bigger is always better, but there is more to it. The numbers assign to your character’s attributes are translated into **attribute ratings**, which determine the **dice category** (D6, D10, etc) used to build pools for the various skills your character has. For example, a character with a **perfect** Strength rating would use D6s for any skill governed by Strength; and if they had four levels in Melee, the pool would be 4D6.

There are four attribute ratings: **perfect**, **good**, **mediocre**, and **poor**. See Table 3 on page 16 to see how the final values of your character’s attribute translate to ratings, and how ratings map onto dice categories. Pay attention to the fact that to get a perfect rating you just have to reach 31—there is no reason to push it higher; similarly, there is no difference between 24 and 29—both numbers translate into a good rating.

MODIFIERS

Both the Archetype and the Race provide attribute modifiers that are combined with the base values to provide the final values you assign to the attributes of your character.

The base values allow you, if you are lucky, to achieve perfect attribute ratings for your character. Usually it is not the case, though, and after rolling the base values you end up with a mix of good and mediocre ratings. Racial and archetype modifiers are a way to push those base numbers up.

The order in which you choose modifiers is not fixed, but in all cases you have to decide which attribute (of the three options) you will be modifying before making a roll.

Table 3: Attribute ratings

range	rating	dice	modifier
1-12	poor	D12	–1
13-22	mediocre	D10	
23-30	good	D8	+1
31+	perfect	D6	+2

Table 4: Racial attribute modifiers

race	attribute modifiers		
	+3D8	+1D8	–1D8
Human	any	any	any
Dwarf	Awareness Endurance Strength	Coordination Cunning Will	Coordination Cunning Dexterity
Elf	Cunning Endurance Will	Awareness Coordination Strength	Coordination Dexterity Strength
Halfling	Coordination Cunning Dexterity	Awareness Strength Will	Awareness Endurance Will

Table 5: Archetype attribute modifiers

archetype	attribute modifier +1D8
Cultist	Awareness, Strength, Will
Rogue	Coordination, Cunning, Dexterity
Sorcerer	Cunning, Endurance, Will
Warrior	Endurance, Strength, Will

RACE

Race provides you with three modifiers, which combined with the base values should on average provide your character with a **perfect**, **good**, and **poor** attribute.

ARCHETYPE

Archetype provides you with one modifier, which should on average push one of your character’s attributes into the **good** rating.

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱

One possible set of numbers you may end up with after the seven 6D8KH4 rolls is: 19, 22, 20, 21, 17, 26, and 23. Let’s use them to continue the example warrior from before.

The most important attribute

One could decide to spend the +3D8 modifier on Strength, since it is the most important attribute for that character. Assuming the result was 12, it would make it possible to take the 19 base value to get 31, which translates to a perfect rating for Strength.

Second and third most important attributes

The second most important attribute for the example warrior is Awareness, which had four tally marks. It could be tied with Endurance, which only got three

but also governs the secondary attribute Health which is important for Warrior characters. Seeing how the Warrior archetype allows getting a +1D8 modifier to Endurance, let's go with that.

Assuming the result was 6, one could combine it with the 26 to get a perfect rating; or even with 17 to pull it out of a mediocre and into a good rating.

Both choices have trade-offs, but it all boils down to whether you are min-maxing a character or not. If you are min-maxing then try to push as many attributes into the perfect range as possible, and rely on other characters in the crew to cover your character's weak spots; otherwise, it is a better idea to pull as many attributes out of mediocre rating as you can.

The +1D8 racial modifier would then go to Awareness. Assuming, for the sake of the example, that the roll was an extremely unlucky 1, it could still be combined with the 22 to pull it—just barely—into the good rating range.

Least important attribute

For the example warrior both Dexterity and Coordination seem to be irrelevant. Coordination can be used to Dodge, though, so let's mark Dexterity as the "dump stat" and use the -1D8 racial modifier on it. Even if the result was -8, the worst possible, it does not matter much, as there are only two values one could reasonable choose for the least important attribute: 20 or 21.

Let's choose the 21 to keep the attribute's rating from slipping into the poor range.

Unmodified attributes

The example warrior has only three attributes left without a value at this point: Coordination, Cunning, and Will; as well as base values: 20, 26, and 23.

Coordination was identified as one of the two least important attributes so it gets the 20, which translates to a mediocre rating.

The other two attributes, Cunning and Will, get the last two values. It does not matter which goes to which. Both 26 and 23 translate to a good rating so can be considered equal, but since Cunning got more tally marks let's assign it the higher number.

Final values

Summarising all of the above, the example warrior's attributes would look like this:

Table 6: Health dice

race	base dice	Endurance rating	
		perfect	poor
Dwarf	D8	D10	D6
Elf	D6	D8	D4
Halfling	D6	D8	D4
Human	D8	D10	D6

modifiers		value		attribute	
		base	final		
+3D8	+12	19	31	Strength	D6
+1D8	+6	17	23	Endurance	D8
+1D8	+1	22	23	Awareness	D8
-1D8	-8	21	13	Dexterity	D10
		20	20	Coordination	D10
		26	26	Cunning	D8
		23	23	Will	D8

DETERMINISTIC ATTRIBUTE

RATINGS

If you would rather not rely on random dice rolls, you can use the standard set of attribute ratings: 1 perfect, 3 good, 2 mediocre, and 1 poor attribute.

The Game Master should make sure every player uses the same method of generating attribute ratings.

7 SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

In contrast to primary attributes described, secondary attributes' values change regularly during play. Some of them can be trained and improved, while others fluctuate more or less freely.

HEALTH POOL

One secondary attribute common to all characters is **Health**. Health represents the vitality of a character, and is derived from Endurance.

Health is described by three values: the dice category, the level, and points.

HEALTH DICE

The category of dice used for the health pool depends on the character's race and Endurance rating. See Table 6: Health dice on page 17. Endurance rating can affect the base dice category.

The example warrior is a human with a good Endurance rating, so his health die is D8+1.

A new character starts with their health at level 4 ie, they have four dice in their health pool. The health pool works the same way any other skill does: it is composed of a number of dice equal to the skill level, with their category dictated by the relevant attribute.

Health level can be improved by following the advancement rules described on page 26.

Health dice can be spent on self-healing (page 30) or when a character gets first aid (page 27). See chapters Trauma and death (page 30) and Medicine (page 27) for more information about damage and healing.

HEALTH POINTS

Health points are what protects characters from death. Once the value of health points reaches zero, a character perishes. See chapter Trauma and death on page 30.

The initial value of health points is determined as if by rolling the whole health pool. First, take the maximum of your character's health die; then roll the rest of the pool normally. Sum the results to get your character's starting health points.

For the example warrior, it could be:

- 9 (the maximum of D8+1 for the first "die")
- 4+1 (second die)
- 5+1 (third die)
- 1+1 (fourth die)

for a total of 22 health points.

Every time a character's health level increases roll their health die to see by how many points their health points increase.

ARCHETYPE POOLS

Archetype Pools are what fuels the special powers of each archetype.

ADRENALINE

The Adrenaline pool does not have a fixed size. It increases when a Warrior saves critical successes

Table 7: Mana dice

race	base dice	Will rating	
		perfect	poor
Dwarf	D6	D8	D4
Elf	D8	D10	D6
Halfling	D8	D10	D6
Human	D6	D8	D4

from combat skills into it, and decreases when the Warrior spends successes saved earlier.

Dice in the Adrenaline pool do not have fixed category, and take shape of the dice used for the skill being augmented by a Power. These dice can be spent on any combat skill, both offensive and defensive.

GUILE

The Guile pool does not have a fixed size. It increases when a Rogue saves critical successes from common skills into it, and decreases when the Rogue spends successes saved earlier.

Dice in the Guile pool do not have fixed category, and take shape of the dice used for the skill being augmented by a Power. These dice can be spent on any common skill.

MANA

Mana is the Archetype Pool of Sorcerer characters. It follows the exact same rules as Health, but is based on Will instead of Endurance, and uses Table 7: Mana dice (on page 18) to determine the die category instead of the health table.

TOTEMS

Cultist characters may have several Totems, and each Totem represents a separate pool. The limit here is that the combined level of the various Totem pools cannot exceed the level of the Cultist's Commune skill.

8 EQUIPMENT

Every character starts with some basic equipment.

WEAPONS

All characters start equipped with **one common weapon**.

Warriors and Rogues get one additional common weapon, and one military weapon (ranged or melee) with at most D8 damage.

Common and military melee weapon tables are shown on page 32. Ranged weapons table can be found on page 32. See chapter Combat skills on page 26 to learn more about offensive skills.

ARMOUR

All characters can choose **one piece** of light armour with the *common* trait.

Rogues can choose *any* piece of light armour.

Warriors have a choice of either a piece of light armour and a shield, or a piece of medium armour.

Armour and shield tables can be found on page 34. See chapter Combat skills on page 26 to learn more about defensive skills.

POSSESSIONS

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MONEY

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9 BACKSTORY

All the other part of a character pertain to *what* the character can do, or *how well* they can do it. With some exceptions, the backstory is mostly about the *why* and *where* of the character; *why* do they do the thing? *where* do they come from, and *where* do their goals lie?

While other sections of the system operate on a “what is not expressly permitted is forbidden” basis, the backstory is more *laissez faire*—what is not expressly forbidden is allowed.

Of course, use common sense when writing the backstory and deciding *who* your character is. If the others want to play a party of do-gooding save-the-world knights, it may not be the best idea to insist on playing an evil character bent on world destruction.

NAMES

All races (see page 20) provide short lists of masculine and feminine names, as well as some general rules about the full names of characters of that particular origin. Different races use different styles for flavour, and while the easiest way is to just use the ready-made suggestions provided by the book you are free to come up with your own ideas.

LANGUAGES AND LITERACY

Both the languages a character knows, and their ability to read and write, have mechanical consequences.

It may make sense for the character who is the “face” of the crew to invest more in these skills, but—as always—it pays off to have different characters be able to cover different languages or situations, just in case.

LANGUAGES

All characters speak the native language of their race, and have moderate proficiency in the common language (see Foreign Language on page 27).

This is enough for most conversations, but impedes using social skills (haggling, polite communication, intimidation, etc) with strangers and people hailing from foreign, faraway lands.

Humans

The above rule is inverted for **Humans**. They have Common as their native language, and are moderately proficient in either dwarfish, elvish, of halflingish.

LITERACY

Not all characters are literate.

Reading and writing are skills that must be learned, but a literate character can read and write in all languages they can speak (to the extent of their proficiency with letters and the language in question). See Literacy on page 27 and Foreign Language on page 27 for more details.

Illiterate characters can purchase services of people who can read and write.

Important announcements are frequently read aloud by herolds in public spaces eg, main squares, major inns and taverns, at regular intervals for the benefit of those who can't read.

10 RACES

The race gives characters some innate abilities eg, dwarves can see in darkness, influences their attributes, and is the third source of common and combat skill proficiencies.

Similarly to a profession, the race can be used as a springboard for the backstory of a character.

HUMAN

Humans come from a wide array of backgrounds and, in contrast to other races, do not have a single dominant culture. Various empires, kingdoms, regions, and tribes have their own customs, traditions, and alliances (or enmities).

TRAITS

Speed

Humans move 8 fields; or 10 fields in their preferred terrain (player's choice).

Resilient

Humans get an extra Health Die every second time they increase their Health level.

SKILLS

Common

Humans can choose any four common skills. Alternatively, they may choose one skill twice to get two sources of proficiency, and another skill once.

Combat

Humans may choose one combat skill twice instead of two combat skills.

DWARF

Dwarves live in highly-organised, militarised, **authoritarian** clan societies; and they are fiercely **loyal** to their clans. Their history is preserved mostly through **clan memory**, which consists of written

documents, but also a huge corpus of ancient songs and sagas.

TRAITS

Speed

Dwarves move 4 fields; unless they are in a dungeon, a cave, a sewer, or any similar underground structure, where they move 6 fields.

See in the dark

Dwarves can see in complete darkness, albeit in shades of gray instead of in colour.

Poison resistance

Target success count for any roll against poison a dwarf makes is reduced by $\frac{1}{4}$ of the dwarf's current Health Dice. Poisons that require fewer successes are automatically neutralised by the dwarf's body.

SKILLS

Common

1. Appraise
2. Blacksmithing
3. First Aid
4. Intimidate
5. Navigation
6. Rhetoric
7. Survey
8. Survival

Combat

Dwarves may choose one combat skill twice instead of two combat skills.

1. Armour Handling
2. Melee (Axe)
3. Melee (Hammer)
4. Ranged (Crossbow)
5. Shields

NAMES

Masculine

1. Olav
2. Harald
3. Erik
4. Sigurd
5. Jan
6. Willem
7. Dirk
8. Pieter
9. Mikko
10. Antti
11. Juhani
12. Tapio

Feminine

1. Ingrid
2. Astrid
3. Ragnhild
4. Gudrun
5. Anna
6. Elisabeth
7. Margaretha
8. Catharina
9. Liisa
10. Marketta
11. Marjatta
12. Kaisa

Family names

The -son and -dottir suffixes depend on the dwarf's sex; -son is the masculine suffix, and -dottir the feminine.

1. -son or -dottir
2. Haugen
3. Berg

4. Østgate
5. Bakker
6. Smit
7. Brouwer
8. Molenaar
9. Korhonen
10. Mäkinen
11. Virtanen
12. Nieminen

ELF

Elves have seen civilisations rise and fall, empires perish, and cultures vanish. They have seen it all, and become convinced that only the most driven and machiavellian remain; they are a **godless** people, who *know* there is no higher power coming to save them, and are **ruthless** in their struggle for survival.

Elves see themselves as **nature's immune system**, and will violently punish anyone they perceive as overstepping their natural niche.

TRAITS

Speed

Elves move 6 fields; unless they are in a forest, field, park, meadow, jungle, or a similar region with plenty of vegetation, where they move 8 fields.

Disease resistance

Target success count for any roll against disease an elf makes is reduced by $\frac{1}{4}$ of the elf's current Health Dice. Diseases that require fewer successes are automatically neutralised by the elf's body.

Blasé

Target success count for any roll against fear, distraction, desire, compassion, or other effects affecting the mind through emotions an elf makes is reduced by $\frac{1}{4}$ of the elf's current Health Dice. Emotions that require fewer successes are automatically suppressed by the elf's mind. When you have lived as long as they did, nothing really impresses you anymore.

SKILLS

Elves may choose the Foreign Language, Grace, and Survival skills twice.

Common

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1. Alchemy | 4. Foreign Language |
| 2. Climb | 5. Grace |
| 3. First Aid | 6. Literacy |
| | 7. Sneak |
| | 8. Survey |

9. Survival

Combat

1. Ranged (Bow)
2. Melee (Sword)
3. Melee (Polearm)
4. Armour Handling

NAMES

Masculine

1. Aodh
2. Diarmuid
3. Eoghan
4. Cormac
5. Ciarán
6. Padraig
7. Owain
8. Llywelyn
9. Rhys
10. Cadwallon
11. Gruffudd
12. Hywel

Feminine

1. Siobhán
2. Aoife
3. Niamh
4. Deirdre
5. Grainne
6. Ailbhe
7. Gwenllian
8. Angharad
9. Catrin
10. Efa
11. Morwen
12. Rhiannon

Family names

Elves do not use family names or surnames. Instead, they use descriptions like "slayer of humans" or "protector of the wilds".

HALFLING

Halflings are **cosmopolitan** people, living in diasporas scattered in every part of the world. Despite being seemingly open, they tend to be **isolate** themselves, and put strict rules on any contact their host societies and other cultures.

When interacting with others, halflings put their trust in **law and contractual agreements** to informal dealings; after all, an oral promise is not worth the paper it is written on.

TRAITS

Speed

Halflings move 4 feet; unless in an urban, rural, or other built-up area, where they move 6 fields.

Crafty

Halflings can spend to actions instead of one on a roll to increase the size of the base pool (ie, the direct pool based on skill level) used by half.

SKILLS

Common

Halflings can choose five common skills once, two skills twice, or a skill twice and two other skills once.

1. Alchemy
2. Appraise
3. Cartography
4. Drive
5. Grace
6. Guile
7. Hide
8. Literacy
9. Medicine
10. Foreign Language
11. Search
12. Sneak

Combat

1. Armour Handling
2. Dodge
3. Melee (Knife)
4. Ranged (Gun)

NAMES

Masculine

1. Otto
2. Heinrich
3. Friedrich
4. Wilhelm
5. Rodrigo
6. Diego
7. Gonzalo
8. Alfonso
9. Nikolaos
10. Alexandros
11. Konstantinos
12. Theodoros

Feminine

1. Gertrude
2. Adelheid
3. Matilda
4. Brunhilde
5. Beatriz
6. Isabel
7. Constanza
8. Leonor
9. Eleni
10. Anastasia
11. Anna
12. Irene

Family names

1. Schmidt
2. Müller
3. Wagner
4. Becker
5. Rodríguez
6. García
7. López
8. Pérez
9. Papadopoulos
10. Nikolaou
11. Katsaros
12. Papadakis

III. PROFESSIONS

Professions are the jobs player characters had before taking up the life of adventure. They supply a fresh character with a list of skills they had the chance of learning during their time working in a particular occupation.

The profession may also be a starting point for the backstory of a character. An adventuring Warrior who in the past has been a Sellsword surely has a different story than a Warrior who used to be a Priest.

11 ARCHETYPE PROFESSIONS

These are professions tailor-made for a particular archetype, and suggested for players who are looking to play a well-defined, even if a bit basic, role. They are also good starting points for new players.

CHARLATAN

A suggested profession for **Rogue** characters.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Melee (<i>Knife</i>) | 5. Haggle |
| 2. Appraise | 6. Hide |
| 3. Foreign language | 7. Literacy |
| 4. Guile | 8. Search |

GUARD

A suggested profession for **Warrior** characters.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Melee (<i>any</i>) | 5. First Aid |
| 2. Armour Handling | 6. Grace |
| 3. Shields | 7. Intimidate |
| 4. Drive | 8. Sneak |

PRIEST

A suggested profession for **Cultist** characters.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Melee (<i>Hammer</i>) | 5. Literacy |
| 2. Focus | 6. Medicine |
| 3. Foreign language | 7. Rhetoric |
| 4. Intimidate | 8. Search |

SCHOLAR

A suggested profession for **Sorcerer** characters.

Scholars can choose the Literacy and Foreign Language skill twice; in the latter case, either to get two languages, or to get a better proficiency in one language.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. Focus | 5. Rhetoric |
| 2. Foreign language | 6. Ride |
| 3. Hide | 7. Search |
| 4. Literacy | 8. Survey |

SCOUNDREL

A suggested profession for **Rogue** characters.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Melee (<i>any</i>) | 5. Hide |
| 2. Ranged (<i>any</i>) | 6. Ride |
| 3. Dodge | 7. Sneak |
| 4. Guile | 8. Survey |

SELLSWORD

A suggested profession for **Warrior** characters.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Melee (<i>any</i>) | 5. Foreign Language |
| 2. Armour Handling | 6. Intimidate |
| 3. Cooking | 7. Ride |
| 4. First Aid | 8. Survey |

WITCH

A suggested profession for **Sorcerer** characters.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Melee (<i>Knife</i>) | 5. Guile |
| 2. Alchemy | 6. Ride |
| 3. Focus | 7. Survival |
| 4. Foreign Language | 8. Swim |

WITCH DOCTOR

A suggested profession for **Cultist** characters.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Melee (<i>any</i>) | 5. First Aid |
| 2. Armour Handling | 6. Foreign Language |
| 3. Alchemy | 7. Intimidate |
| 4. Cooking | 8. Survival |

IV. ARCHETYPES

Archetypes provide characters with special **Powers** fuelled by dice from **Archetype Pools**. These Powers are unique to the Archetype and cannot be obtained any other way, as they are intended to provide both mechanics and a distinct *theme* for each Archetype:

- the **Warrior** uses **Adrenaline** to fuel their **Moves** in combat
- the **Rogue** uses **Guile** to enhance their skills with **Tricks**
- the **Sorcerer** uses **Mana** to create magic with **Spells**
- the **Cultist** uses **Totems** to channel their master's power through **Invocations**

The Powers allow Archetypes to bend rules in specific ways, or do things that are normally forbidden or impossible, but are all ultimately used to augment the player character's skills. This means that while nothing prevents a Sorcerer from learning how to swing a sword, the *theme* of the Sorcerer Archetype will not mesh particularly well with that goal, because the Sorcerer *theme* does not provide a way to bend the rules of combat skills. The *theme* guides the player to use their character to play a certain role in the game.

Dice in Archetype Pools are abstract and do not have a fixed number of sides. When a player chooses to spend dice from the Archetype Pool to fuel a Power, these spent dice take shape of the dice used for the augmented Skill ie, they dependent on the Attribute used for that Skill.

For example, a Warrior character may use D6s when spending Adrenaline dice on a Move augmenting an offensive skill, and D8s when spending Adrenaline dice on a Move augmenting a defensive skill.

12 WARRIOR

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ADRENALINE

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MOVES

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13 ROGUE

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GUILE

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TRICKS

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14 SORCERER

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MANA

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SPELLS

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15 CULTIST

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TOTEMS

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INVOCATIONS

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V. SKILLS

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16 RULES

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17 EXPERIENCE AND ADVANCEMENT

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EXPERIENCE

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ADVANCEMENT

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18 COMBAT SKILLS

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MELEE

Attribute: Strength

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UNARMED MELEE

Attribute: Strength

RANGED

Attribute: Coordination

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DEFENSE

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ARMOUR HANDLING

Attribute: Endurance

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DODGE

Attribute: Coordination

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SHIELDS

Attribute: Strength

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19 COMMON SKILLS

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CRAFT

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ALCHEMY

Attribute: Cunning

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BLACKSMITHING

Attribute: Strength

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CARTOGRAPHY

Attribute: Cunning

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COOKING

Attribute: Awareness

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DRIVE

Attribute: Awareness

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FIRST AID

Attribute: Awareness

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MEDICINE

Attribute: Cunning

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NAVIGATION

Attribute: Cunning

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SAIL

Attribute: Coordination

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SOCIAL

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Attribute: Cunning

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GRACE

Attribute: Awareness

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GUILE

Attribute: Cunning

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HAGGLE

Attribute: Will

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INTIMIDATE

Attribute: Strength

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LITERACY

Attribute: Cunning

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RHETORIC

Attribute: Will

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UTILITY

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ANIMAL CARE

Attribute: Awareness

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ANIMAL CONTROL

Attribute: Will

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APPRAISE

Attribute: Cunning

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CLIMB

Attribute: Strength

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FOCUS

Attribute: Will

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HIDE

Attribute: Cunning

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LOCKPICKING

Attribute: Dexterity

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RIDE

Attribute: Endurance

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SEARCH

Attribute: Cunning

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SURVEY

Attribute: Awareness

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SURVIVAL

Attribute: Cunning

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SWIM

Attribute: Endurance

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TRAPS

Attribute: Dexterity

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USE ROPE

Attribute: Dexterity

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VI. COMBAT

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20 STRUCTURE

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ROUNDS

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TURNS

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TURN ORDER

Turn order is determined by the success count of declared actions. At the beginning of the round, everyone declares an action, rolls for it simultaneously, and the effects are resolved as if they happen at roughly the same time.

Every declaration must be something to roll for. Otherwise, it would be way too difficult to account for movement: one player decides to attack, then the GM says that a monster moves, so the player changes their mind, and so on ad infinitum.

Sometimes a player cannot execute a melee attack, because they are out of range. Then, the proper course of action is to declare the **Charge** action.

Sometimes a player cannot be sure if their spell can reach a monster. They may decide to either stay put and hope for enough successes to extend the range, or declare the spell and movement together.

To help resolve any impasse, the GM should follow the default tactics and manoeuvres determined by the monsters' Roles. For example, **Artillery** will try shoot someone, but stay put; **Focused damage** will either charge, or stay close and attack; **Harassment** will charge, then run back.

21 A ROUND

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BEGINNING

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RESOLUTION

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END

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22 A TURN

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ACTIONS

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MOVEMENT

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23 SKIRMISH

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ATTACK

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DEFENSE

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PASSIVE

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ACTIVE

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DAMAGE

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CRITICAL HITS

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24 HEALING

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SELF-RECOVERY

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MAGICAL HEALING

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ALCHEMICAL STIMULANTS

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25 TRAUMA AND DEATH

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VII. MAGIC

26 CONDITIONS

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STUNNED

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VIII. EQUIPMENT

27 WEAPONS

The combination of category and damage type, together with base damage die provide the basic information about a weapon. On top of it, traits add extra capabilities to the weapon.

CATEGORIES

Weapon categories were first mentioned in the section about offensive skills on page 11, during character creation. A character's skill level in a particular weapon category determines how well the character is able to use that weapon, and it applies to both melee (page 26) and ranged (page 26) weapons.

All weapons with the same category share a trait. This trait may appear in the descriptions of weapons outside of this category, but it will be less common.

Table 8: Melee weapon categories

sign	category	default trait
A	axe	<i>vicious</i>
H	hammer	<i>crushing</i>
K	knife	<i>quick</i>
P	polearm	<i>charge breaking</i>
S	sword	<i>parry</i>
U	unarmed	<i>stunning</i>

Ranged some weapon categories have multiple default traits. Particularly notable is the *illegal* trait, which reflects the facts that possessing such weapons is forbidden without a license.

Table 9: Ranged weapon categories

sign	category	default trait
B	bow	<i>quick</i>
C	crossbow	<i>vicious, load, illegal</i>
G	gun	<i>stunning, load, illegal</i>

DAMAGE TYPES

There are three kinds of immediate, physical damage a weapon may cause; as shown in table Weapon damage types.

Table 10: Weapon damage types

sign	category	effect
B	blunt	ignore armour's defense rating
P	piercing	increase the pool of critical dice
S	slashing	lower critical hit threshold

A magical weapon, or a weapon whose blade was coated with poison, still deals damage of one of the above types. The magical, poison, or any other special kind of damage only augments the weapon—it does not fundamentally change its properties.

BLUNT

Blunt weapons ignore any armour (including shields) of the attacked creature, by reducing any and all passive defense bonuses to zero. There are pieces of armour that counteract this effect, but unless explicitly stated otherwise in an armour's description blunt weapons ignore armour.

PIERCING

Piercing weapons increase the pool of critical dice, scored on critical hits, by half. As for blunt weapons, there *are* pieces of armour designed to counteract this, but by default piercing weapons increase the damage done by critical hits.

SLASHING

Slashing weapons make it easier to score critical hits, by lowering the critical threshold to *one* success over the defender's success count. See Attack on page 29 for more information about attacks and defense.

TRAITS

Traits add capabilities to a weapon, potentially making it more useful in specific situations.

COMMON

Common weapons no not require a permit to buy, carry, and use. Most common weapons are repurposed tools, and it would simply be ridiculously impractical to forbid their possession.

Weapons without this trait require a permit to own and carry, and the weapon must have a seal of a legal

blacksmiths' guild. Without satisfying these requirements the weapon is treated as illegal; it may be confiscated, and the owner become a person of interest to local law enforcement.

Combat readiness

Common weapons are not as effective as proper ones. They use D4 for extra damage on critical hits, and carry a half-pool penalty to critical dice ie, the number of dice scored on a critical hit is divided by two.

However, with enough reinforcement and modifications they become as effective as purpose-designed weapons. Such modifications can be made with varying success by most blacksmiths; but by doing so, the blacksmiths risk harsh punishments, and the tool itself gains the **illegal** trait (see below).

The modifications are not immediately obvious, but are not subtle either. A perceptive guard can notice the difference, and may try to detain anyone carrying such a weapon.

ILLEGAL

It is not possible to obtain a license to carry illegal weapons outside of special circumstances eg, being a member of the military or law enforcement. When one cannot obtain them legally, such weapons are still available on the black market.

CHARGE-BREAKING

Charge-breaking weapons can be used to defend against charging creatures. Wielding a charge-breaking weapon allows one to use an action to prepare the weapon and brace oneself against a charge; this lowers the extra dice the charging creature gets by half.

CRUSHING

Crushing weapons add an extra die of damage for every two critical dice spent on reducing durability of armour.

LOAD

Such weapons require *two* actions to use: one to load the weapon with a bolt or a bullet, and one to attack.

It is not necessary that the same creature performs these two actions; one creature may load a weapon, and another may shoot it. Similarly, it is not necessary that loading and shooting are executed as part of the same turn.

PARRY

Parrying weapons allow using a **Melee** skill of matching category instead of **Dodge** in active defense.

QUICK

Quick weapons grant one additional attack per round. One must spend at least one action on making an attack to use this trait; it does not grant a *gratis* attack, only an extra one after a normal attack has been made.

STUNNING

Stunning weapons add an extra die for every two critical dice spent on applying the **stunned** condition (see page 31).

THROWN

Thrown weapons can be used to make a ranged attack using a skill from the **Melee** family. See page 33 for an explanation of the range notation.

VICIOUS

Vicious weapons add an extra die for every two critical dice spent on dealing additional damage.

Alternatively, the weapon may target the dice in the Health Pool directly. Such an attack reduces the number of dice in the target's Health Pool by one for each critical success spent.

DESCRIPTIONS

The entries in melee (page 34) and ranged (page 34) weapon tables provide a concise overview of every available weapon's attributes, compressing the most important information into a few columns.

Dummy melee weapon entry

	weapon	dmg		dy	cost	traits
s	Melee example	D8	B	6	1sg	quick

The entries for ranged weapons look a little different, because ranged attacks have an effective distance (hence the *range* column), and their damage type and traits depend on what kind of ammunition is used.

Dummy ranged weapon entry

	weapon	dmg	range		dy	cost
B	Ranged example	D6	60	90	6	1sg

Table 11: Melee weapons

	weapon	dmg	dy	cost	traits
s	<i>Hatchet</i>	D6	s	6	1sg

weapon common weapons have their name in italics
† special mechanics explained in the description of a weapon
‡ a weapon requires two hands to wield

The first, unnamed, column specifies the weapon's category and tells what skill governs a weapon's use. See the weapon category tables on page 32.

The **weapon** column states a weapon's name.

For melee weapons, the **dmg** column states a weapon's damage dice and type (see table Weapon damage types on page 32). For ranged weapons, it states only the damage dice since type of damage depends on the ammunition used.

The **dy** column shows how many durability points a weapon has. These points reflect the sturdiness of the weapon, and can be treated as a pool from which dice can be taken and added to an attack roll.

The **range** column gives both the *short* and *long* range of a weapon. Shooting at targets in the short range does not carry any penalties; attacking targets in long range carries a half-pool penalty; and shooting targets beyond long range is not possible with any ranged weapon sans the longbow.

The **cost** column states a weapons price.

The **traits** column lists any additional traits (see page 32) a weapon has.

MELEE

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RANGED

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Figure 1: Ranged weapons

AMMUNITION

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28 ARMOUR

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A. PHILOSOPHY

Ozro is not a game for everyone.

It is a game designed to suit my personal style, and to give me the best possible experience while running it. I designed it first and foremost for myself, and it is just by accident that some other people may find it appealing.

This appendix presents the underpinnings, reasons, assumptions, and principles upon which Ozro was built. Everyone can play the game however they want, but it will give the best results if every person at the table agrees with most of the philosophy of the game.

29 WHAT IS THE GAME ABOUT?

The in-game answer is simple: the game is about a group of adventurers growing more powerful, and overcoming obstacles presented by the game world. It is, however, only one side of the coin, exactly as the player characters are just one half of the actor—the other half being the actual players.

And so, the meta-game answer is that the game is a way to realise a power fantasy, experience catharsis, and have a bloody good time with your friends.

30 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A PLAYER CHARACTER?

What I said in chapter 2 about the player characters, that they are “a set of values on a character sheet” is true, but it is not the whole truth. The whole truth is that those values, those numbers, are the vehicle by which the power fantasy can be realised. The game does not reward theatrics and shakespeareing in *any way whatsoever*. Everything that counts is on the character sheet, anything that is not on the character

sheet is irrelevant; this is both *final*, and *crucial element* of the game’s design. Why?

Again, the answer is pretty simple: to provide as clear and sharp a separation between the *player* and the *player character* as possible.

The reason for this is that we neither fully control who we are, nor who we want to be. I suspect everyone has some aspirations that will never be fully achieved (I believe those are what people call *dreams*), and some aspects of themselves that they would rather hide or reject.

THE POWER FANTASY

Remember that one of the goals of the game is to provide an outlet for the power fantasy of a player.

HARD POWER

In case of “power” taken literally it is quite a simple goal.

A player creates a character with a perfect Strength rating, puts his skill points into Melee (Sword), calls his character Koman, then goes on to happily hack-n-slash his foes, and all is fine and dandy. No one in their right mind will ask Koman to *show* exactly *how* he is splitting the skull of that goblin warlord, or how he cuts through the belly of that beast.

SOFT POWER

Now imagine, if you will, a person who is naturally shy and timid, but who dreams about being a charismatic socialite, feeling at home both in a tête-à-tête and a debate watched by a crowd.

Let us then say that, to realise their particular power fantasy this person creates such a character—the most daring rogue to have ever dared, the smoothest operator to ever have operated—and names him Joe. During a game, Joe finds himself with his crew on a black-market, looking for guns, and plenty of them. The only merchant who can deliver the goods in required quantity drives a hard bargain, but Joe is determined to drive an *even harder one*—after all, the character was created for exactly this type of a situation.

Not only is he the only one on the whole crew who can fluently speak the merchant's language (notice the XP spent on Foreign Language), he is also the only one with enough street etiquette (through the Grace skill) to even get the merchant to do business with them. His Foreign Language level is so high that he does not even need to roll, and the success count on his Grace roll is enough to convince the merchant that the crew can be trusted.

Now comes the time to Haggle. Joe uses the successes he saved from the Grace roll to get an even better deal, gathers the impressively-sized dice pool ready to unleash it upon the merchant... and then the game master interrupts with a seemingly innocent question: "So, tell me, how exactly do you convince the merchant to give you a better price? After all, you are first-time customers who have not yet proven themselves."

The game promptly and screechingly comes to a halt. The power fantasy is ruined.

A PLAYER AND HIS CHARACTER

See, the thing is, the player who *plays the role* of Joe *does not know* how to convince a merchant, or how to haggle. Or maybe he knows the theory but, being the timid person he is, he lacks the practical interpersonal skills to use the theory in practice. Regardless of what they are, the personal qualities of the player do not matter in the slightest, because it is not the *player* who is haggling, but the *player character*.

The player built the character to realise a fantasy, to engage in escapism, not to be faced with the same problems they face in everyday life. The answer to the question "How do you convince the merchant?" is, and must be, "With Joe's Haggle pool of 12D6, that's how!"

If the game master does not take a hint and restates the question, the only proper response is "Fuck you, my success count is 9."

This does not mean that players can lord over the game master and do whatever they want whenever they want. Make no mistake, the game master is still the one who calls all the shots.

However, the only thing a game master can ask of a player concerning an in-game action is to roll for a particular skill. "You want to convince the merchant to give you a better price? Roll for Haggle." This is how an action should be resolved. "Tell me how you convince him" is an unacceptable proposition. Players

are not part of the game world, and cannot influence it in any way directly—the only way they can interact with it is through their characters.

To this end, the distinction between the *player* and the *character* must be ruthlessly enforced.

This is why I asserted that the game is not for everyone.

To some people, what I have said above is sacrilege, a style derisively referred to as *roll-playing*, leading to the sins of *meta-gaming* and *immersion-breaking*. To others, it is epiphany and liberation, and what lets them immerse themselves in the game.

It is to those others, those roll-playing sinners, to whom this game is dedicated and for whom it was designed; and, from this place, I heartily invite them in—there is place enough in hell for all of us.

B. ARCHETYPE AND CLASS DESIGN

Every Archetype has a specific dice pool used to fuel the Archetype's Powers, and the way the Archetype manages dice in its Pool affects the Archetype's utility in different situations in the game, particularly in combat.

The *design intentions* for each Archetype in combat are:

- the **Warrior** gathers **Adrenaline** on weaker enemies, by scoring easy critical hits, and spends the dice to bring down stronger enemies
- the **Rogue** gathers **Guile** *before* combat starts eg, by doing research about the enemies or the location, and uses that to support the party by controlling the turn order, or affecting the enemies with social skills
- the **Sorcerer** has a pool of **Mana** ready to go before combat starts, and can use that to provide precise targeted damage or healing as necessary, providing the early advantage to the main damage-dealer that is the **Warrior**
- the **Cultist** has a virtually infinite pool split into different **Totems** and is intended to provide sustained buffs and debuffs, switching totems as needed

The Game Master may explain this to the players who are more mechanically-oriented, or let this assumption implicit remain unstated when running games for groups that are more focused on the fantasy.

31 CLASSES

Each player character starts with a **primary Archetype**. After spending 6000 XP on character progression they gain the ability to choose a **secondary Archetype**, and the mix of the two Archetypes forms a **Class**. Characters with two Archetypes are able to use Powers of both of them, but they only have the Archetype Pool of the primary Archetype.

Table 12: Character Classes

Archetype		Class
primary	secondary	
Warrior	Sorcerer	Berserker
Warrior	Rogue	Warlord
Warrior	Cultist	Fanatic
Rogue	Sorcerer	Illusionist
Rogue	Warrior	Assassin
Rogue	Cultist	Soothsayer
Cultist	Sorcerer	Heretic
Cultist	Rogue	Genius
Cultist	Warrior	Crusader
Sorcerer	Warrior	Battlemage
Sorcerer	Rogue	Magician
Sorcerer	Cultist	Warlock

For example, the **Berserker** (a character whose primary Archetype is the Warrior and secondary the Sorcerer) is able to cast Spells with Sorcery, but they need to spend Adrenaline instead of Mana. Similarly, the **Battlemage** (a character whose primary Archetype is the Sorcerer and secondary the Warrior) is able to use Moves, but they need to spend Mana instead of Adrenaline.

BERSERKER

The Berserker is a **Warrior** who can use **Adrenaline** instead of Mana to power the Sorcerer's **Spells**. Necessarily, the Berserker gains access to the **Sorcery** skill.

WARLORD

The Warlord is a **Warrior** who can use **Adrenaline** instead of Guile to power the Rogue's **Tricks**.

FANATIC

The Fanatic is a **Warrior** who can use **Adrenaline** instead of Totems to power the Cultist's **Invocations**. Necessarily, the Fanatic gains access to the **Commune** skill.

ILLUSIONIST

The Illusionist is a **Rogue** who can use **Guile** instead of Mana to power the Sorcerer's **Spells**. Necessarily, the Illusionist gains access to the **Sorcery** skill.

ASSASSIN

The Assassin is a **Rogue** who can use **Guile** instead of Adrenaline to power the Warrior's **Moves**.

SOOTHSAYER

The Soothsayer is a **Rogue** who can use **Guile** instead of Totems to power the Cultist's **Invocations**. Necessarily, the Soothsayer gains access to the **Commune** skill.

HERETIC

The Heretic is a **Cultist** who can use **Totems** instead of Mana to power the Sorcerer's **Spells**. Necessarily, the Heretic gains access to the **Sorcery** skill. When casting a Spell, the Heretic adds a Totem's purity instead of Mana to the pool. A Totem cannot be used to power **Sorcery** and **Commune** on the same round.

GENIUS

The Genius is a **Cultist** who can use **Totems** instead of Guile to power the Rogue's **Tricks**. When using a Trick, the Genius adds a Totem's purity instead of Guile to the pool. A Totem cannot be used to power **Tricks** and **Commune** on the same round.

CRUSADER

The Crusader is a **Cultist** who can use **Totems** instead of Adrenaline to power the Warrior's **Moves**. When using a Move, the Crusader adds a Totem's purity instead of Adrenaline to the pool. A Totem cannot be used to power **Moves** and **Commune** on the same round.

BATTELMAGE

The Battlemage is a **Sorcerer** who can use **Mana** instead of Adrenaline to power the Warrior's **Moves**.

MAGICIAN

The Magician is a **Sorcerer** who can use **Mana** instead of Guile to power the Rogue's **Tricks**.

WARLOCK

The Warlock is a **Sorcerer** who can use **Mana** instead of Totems to power the Cultist's **Invocations**. Necessarily, the Warlock gains access to the **Commune** skill.

C. MONSTER DESIGN

32 EQUILIBRIUM OF MONSTERS AND ADVENTURERS

Combat is balanced on the struggle between the Typical Monster and the Typical Adventurer, which boils down to essentially two numbers:

- **Kills-In** ie, how many attacks does it take the Typical Monster need to kill the Typical Adventurer
- **Killed-In** ie, how many attacks from the Typical Adventurer can the Typical Monster survive

The most important thing about them is how they relate to each other, and it is a simple relationship:

The ratio of **Kills-In** to **Killed-In** is 4 : 3.

This means that, on average, the Typical Monster needs 4 attacks to kill the Typical Adventurer, and can itself survive 3 attacks.

Why these numbers?

SOURCE OF THE NUMBERS

The important thing to realise is that *everything* in this appendix is based on averages. Instead of thinking “what does this look like in a single skirmish?” you should think “what does this look like over a thousand battles?”

KILLS-IN

This number is based on the Typical Adventurer’s Health pool.

A player character starts with 4 dice in their Health Pool, and with the amount of Health equal to four rolls of their Health Die.

If you looked at Deterministic attribute ratings on page page 17 you would see that the Typical Adventurer is expected to have only 1 perfect Attribute, since Strength is the most important Attribute for the offense-focused Warrior, Endurance of the Typical Adventurer must necessarily only have

a good rating. This means that the **Health Die** of the **Typical Adventurer** is **d8**.

Rules in chapter Weapons on page page 32 state that regular weapons deal d8 of damage. It is no accident that the typical weapon uses the same die category for its damage as the Typical Adventurer uses for their Health Die. Categories of these two sets of dice being equal means that a single attack deals enough damage to erase one Health Die worth of Health points.

GREATEST COMMON FACTOR

Put on a game designer’s hat on for a moment, and see that this reduces the whole combat balance to something incredibly simple:

- a character’s health points are irrelevant, and what is relevant is how many dice they have in their Health Pool
- the damage dealt is irrelevant, and what is relevant is that an attack connects and erases one-die worth of health points

The players see nice and satisfying big numbers. The game designer sees nice and simple small numbers: a creature suffers one attack, and it is one step closer to death.

So, if one attack erases one Health Die, and if a freshly created Typical Adventurer has four Health Dice, the Typical Monster can kill the Typical Adventurer with four attacks. Hence, **Kills-In** of 4.

Actions per turn

Coincidentally, this is also the source of the “three actions per turn” limit. The Typical Monster cannot kill the Typical Adventurer in one turn; it needs a little bit more than a full turn, which gives the whole party some time to react.

KILLED-IN

This number is based on the Typical Adventurer’s damage output.

As has already been established, one attack brings a creature one step closer to death. For the game to continue the player characters should be more likely to survive combat than to die, and the game can be rigged in players’ favour by making the Typical

Adventurer kill the Typical Monster a bit earlier than it kills them. Hence, **Killed-In** of 3.

Player character's have 3 actions per turn, and if they spend each action to make an attack then the Typical Adventurer should kill the Typical Monster in a single turn. Given the fact that it takes the Typical Monster slightly longer than a full turn to kill a Typical Adventurer, we get the desired result. The scales are tipped ever so slightly in the players' favour.

TENSION

There is usually more than one monster present in the typical combat scene.

If the Typical Adventurer spent all their actions on attacks and none on defense, they would leave themselves wide open to retaliation and most likely die. They killed one monster, sure, but the rest of the monsters devoured them the very next second.

This is where Active Defense (see page 30) helps. In the Beginning phase of a round, before anything has happened, a player can declare that their character engages in Active Defense, spend an action, and then be able to defend themselves against any and all attacks against them on that round.

The working assumption is that this is the tactic that most players will use most of the time, as this gives their characters the best protection. However, it also means that the Typical Adventurer engaging in Active Defense cannot execute three attacks in a single turn and reach the Typical Monsters **Killed-In** number.

This is the first source of tension: the **Kills-In** to **Killed-In** ratio gives players an advantage, but only in a gentlemanly duel. In a "real" fight, the players have to make choices, and each choice has a trade-off:

- go all-in on offense and kill the monster in a single turn
- but if something goes wrong, not only the monster survives, but the character is exposed
- what if two monsters are focused on one Adventurer? then spending an action on Active Defense makes total sense
- what if...
- how about...

That is when the Archetypes come into play: the Warrior may start defensively until they gather enough Adrenaline to go on a rampage; the Rogue may direct the monsters' focus, and shoot them from

a safe distance; the Sorcerer may keep the squad healed, or wipe groups of weaker monsters using area-of-effect spells; the Cultist may use several totems to keep each character buffed, or put constant pressure on some enemies.

33 TYPICAL MONSTER

Typical Monster is equal to a Typical Adventurer of the same experience level. This is the reason why monster descriptions do not really show attribute ratings and skill levels: these values should be taken from the player characters' sheets.

The Typical Adventurer is assumed to be a Human Warrior focused on offense, and most monsters are based on this template.

When creating a monster, or adjusting an existing one, just mirror the statistics of the Warrior character in your group; if there are more Warriors then take average of their statistics, rounding all values, including Attribute Ratings, up.

VARIANTS

The typical monster can be quickly made into a stronger or a weaker version by applying a variant.

MINION

This monster is killed by the first attack that hits it, regardless of damage.

Boss

Increase this monster's success range to 1-3 for two of its most important skills, and increase its Health and Health Pool by half.

34 MAGICAL VS MUNDANE CREATURES

A magical creature is any creature whose existence depends on magic. Vampires, ghosts, banshees, zombies, elemental spirits, werewolves, etc.

Any undead is automatically magical.

Any creature that is not magical is mundane.

This is not a split on *natural* vs *unnatural* creatures. A magical creature eg, a werewolf, is perfectly natural, since it is created by nature itself (in the case of a werewolf - the Moon creates it).

Magical creatures get either the **magical** tag in their description, or any tag that implies **magical** eg, the **undead** tag.

35 TRAITS

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BLOODTHIRSTY

This monster never gets **scared**, never **panics**, and never stops attacking if it managed to get a foe to the **bloodied** state ie, $\frac{1}{2}$ of Health.

With every other attack, the monster also attacks Health Pool directly, as if by using a weapon with the Vicious trait (see page page 33).

BRAVE

This monster gets **scared** and **panics** twice as late as a typical monster.

CHICKEN

This monster gets **scared** and **panics** twice as early as a typical monster.

CRAVEN

This monster gets half-pool penalties to Focus rolls against the **fear** and **panic** status effects.

DARTING

Can move without spending an action, or move twice as fast as a typical monster when spending an action.

FEARLESS

This monster gets half-pool bonus to Focus rolls against the **fear** status effect, and never **panics**.

MINDLESS

Immune to **fear** and **panic** status effects.

REGENERATING (N)

This monster regenerates Health at the end of each round, as if by rolling *n* Health Dice. If the number of dice is not specified explicitly, the monster regenerates as if by rolling *all* of the dice currently in its Health Pool.

For example, a monster with Regenerating (2) and D8 Health Dice regenerates as if by rolling 2D8.

Dice rolled for this trait are *not* taken from the Health Pool of the creature, so regeneration does not require spending any dice from the Health Pool.

SHIFTY

This monster gets a half-pool bonus to active defense.

UNSTOPPABLE

Immune to **stun** and **immobilise** status effects.

36 ROLES

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ARTILLERY

This monster's role is to use ranged attacks (mundane or magical). It stays in the back. When engaged in melee, it tries to run away; when it can't stay away from close-quarters combat for a full round it will switch to melee.

Such monsters have the **Chicken** trait.

Use them in groups of at least two.

HARASSMENT

This monster's role is to use melee attacks. It tries to get into close-quarters combat, attack a single target, then step away again to stay out of harms way.

Such monsters have the **Darting** traits.

FOCUSED DAMAGE

This monster's role is to use melee attacks. It tries to get into close-quarters combat with the nearest enemy, and focus on them until either the enemy or the monster is dead.

Such monsters have the **Fearless** trait.

These are mostly big, dumb brutes focused on doing as much damage as possible in a short amount of time.

ASSAULT

This monster role is to use melee attacks. It stays in a group, and its first priority is offense.

Use them in groups of at least two.

DEFENSE

This monster role is to use melee attacks and provide defense for other monsters. If there are **Artillery** monsters present, it tries to position itself between the **Artillery** and the enemies, and then advance on the enemy. Once **Frontline** is in melee range, it attacks and follows the enemy it has engaged, unless the creature or object it is defending comes under attack.

Such monsters have the **Brave** trait.

Use them in groups of at least two.

DENIAL

This monster's role is to deny players agency. It uses social skills to force the player characters to focus on specific enemies by taunting or deceiving them.

D. EQUIPMENT DESIGN

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37 WEAPONS

This chapter only explains details not already covered in chapter Weapons on page 32.

MATERIALS

Primitive weapons are made of bone, stone, or copper. The typical weapons player characters use are made of metals listed below, in increasing order of effectiveness:

- bronze
- iron
- steel
- silver steel, electrum
- meteorite steel

The primary role of different materials is to increase durability of weapons.

The three steel alloys (silver steel, electrum) are used for their additional properties, not increased durability:

- a weapon made of **silver steel** grants D4 dice against *magical monsters* (see Magical vs mundane creatures on page 40) when the weapon's durability is spent
- a weapon made of **electrum** (golden steel) grants D4 dice against *non-magical monsters* when the weapon's durability is spent
- a weapon made of **mithril** (mithril steel) grants D4 dice against *magical creatures* when the weapon's durability is spent

A weapon made of **meteorite steel** does not grant any special dice, but is extremely durable (and extremely expensive).

38 ARMOUR

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MATERIALS

Primitive armour is made of bone, skins, etc. The typical armour player characters use can be made of leather or cloth, but is mostly made of metals listed below, in increasing order of effectiveness:

- bronze
- iron
- steel
- mithril
- titan

The primary role of different materials is to increase durability of armour.

Armour made of **mithril** reduces the potency of any magical effects, both beneficial and harmful, against the wearer by half, but also cuts the armour's durability in half versus steel.

Armour made of titan does not grant any special dice, but is extremely durable (though extremely expensive).

39 ALCHEMY AND MEDICINE

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POTIONS VS ELIXIRS

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SALVES, POWDERS, AND PILLS

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40 TOOLS, KITS, AND GOODS

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41 TRINKETS AND MAGIC ITEMS

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AMULETS VS TALISMANS

Amulets are *defensive* in nature ie, they protect the wearer, but do not affect the world at large. Talismans are *offensive* in nature ie, they help the wearer affect the outside world.

E. ADVENTURE DESIGN

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42 COMBAT SCENES

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43 REWARDS

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F. GAME MASTER'S QUARTERS

44 WORLD BUILDING

ADVICE

WEAPON PERMITS

The game master is encouraged to use weapon permit rules (see Common on page 32) to telegraph the state of the area the player characters are in.

Relatively safe cities and towns in calm regions will have stricter rules, and weapons will mostly be carried by the military or law enforcement; even in villages only the members of the local militia would have permits. Player characters may be required to deposit their legal weapons with the city guard before they enter a city, or obtain additional permits.

Frontier towns and settlements will have much more lax approach to permits, and should generally be much more accepting of people carrying weapons, as threats are much more common in regions on the borderlands of civilisation.

These assumptions *not* being true should be a signal to players that something is different about the place they have just entered.

G. FURTHER READING

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45 FOR PLAYERS

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46 FOR GAME MASTERS

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